



Rivera Pedroza, M. A. (2021). *Life without us. The disappearance of people in Mexico, Chile, Argentina and Kurdistan; voices of victims and specialists*. Mexico City: Ed. Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung and Brigadas para leer en libertad.S

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"La vida sin nosotros" (Life without us) is a book by the narrator, teacher and writer of journalistic columns: Miguel Alejandro Rivera. He specializes in investigative journalism and conducts in-depth analysis for the magazine "Asamblea", the newspaper "El Día" and other digital media. This book compiles journalistic investigations on the subject of the disappearance of people in Mexico. However, in its reading one finds the profound relationship between this crime and torture.

The author begins with a description of the authoritarian context in Mexico during the period of the hegemonic PRI party and compares it with the experiences of the military dictatorships of Chile, with Pinochet, and Argentina, with Videla. In all three nations, the governments used disappearance and torture as means of social control against opponents of the regime. He also analyzes the disappearance of people from Kurdistan in the Middle East.

The book presents cases of people who survived disappearance, but usually after experiencing torture methods. The author in one section presents the testimony of relatives searching for their loved ones in authentic horror stories. In that part he narrates in detail some acts of torture associated with the practices of repressive States. In the other, Miguel Alejandro narrates the opinion of specialists and academics dedicated to the study and promotion of human rights of the direct and indirect victims of these two crimes.

The book has solid arguments to support the main hypothesis: the Mexican state no longer disappears or tortures citizens, now; powerful criminal organizations practice it against their enemies. Eventually some corrupt public officials collaborate with criminals, always in a manner contrary to human rights. For this reason, the prosecutor's office is denouncing some police and military personnel for their direct participation in the crime of disappearance and torture. In addition, the author indicates that the increase of these crimes grew exponentially in the era of former President Felipe Calderon in the strategy called "War on Drug Trafficking", but continued until the six-year term of Enrique Peña Nieto and now in the term of Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador.

Specialists and academics explain that disappearance and torture are a type of message between criminal groups. This consists of showing the power of one group

to another, for example; "we can take your territory with complete impunity". Therefore, the book will guide the reader through stories that invite us to reflect on these crimes in today's democratic nations. The new regimes established a set of institutions to protect the rights of victims of disappearance and torture against the State, but this institutional and legal framework is insufficient to confront them when private individuals commit them.

Although the reasons and the torturers now are different from those of the past, the families of the disappeared and tortured people suffer the same terror as the families of those who lost their loved ones in the military dictatorships of Chile, Argentina and Kurdistan. For this reason, the book should be part of the collection of researchers, activists and authorities interested in the issue of violence in democracies.